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September 29, 2025

Ohio House of Representatives  
Arts, Athletics, and Tourism Committee

Chair Miller, Vice-Chair Hiner, Ranking Member Jarrells, and all members of the House Arts, Athletics, and Tourism Committee,

I am Peggy Courtney, Executive Director of the Sandusky County Visitors Bureau. I am writing in support of HB 312 that would designate the walleye as Ohio's State Fish.

For generations, sport fisherman from across the United States have flocked to the Sandusky River in Fremont, Ohio each spring to partake in the thrilling walleye run. The spring run is renowned for yielding some of the largest walleye taken from Lake Erie each year. After the fish spawn in our river, they travel to Lake Erie where over 500,000 anglers fish the waters of the lake annually.

The spectacular fishing of the spring run on the Sandusky River largely contributes to tourism in Sandusky County. According to the 2023 Ohio Visitor Economy Tourism Study presented by Tourism Economics, visitors to Sandusky County generated business sales of \$229.3 million, up 31.03% from two years prior, making Sandusky County #1 in the state in Tourism Sales Growth (nearly double the statewide average of 16.86%). In 2023, tourism in our county generated \$29 million in tax revenue. Without that tourism tax revenue coming into our county, our residential households would have to pay an additional \$614 annually in taxes. When people travel, they not only spend money on their designated activity but also in restaurants, fuel, shopping, hotels and more. These additional dollars coming into our community contribute to our local tax base which is a big "win" for all.

Walleye fishing in Ohio, particularly on Lake Erie, drives a billion-dollar outdoor recreation industry, supporting local businesses, tourism and jobs. Beyond the economic boost, walleye fishing creates lasting family traditions with generations of Americans bonding over early mornings on the lake, big catches and stories of time spent on the waters of Ohio. Making the walleye the official state fish of Ohio would honor both its economic and cultural significance. As a species that sustains a thriving recreation industry while also symbolizing cherished family traditions, the walleye perfectly represents Ohio's natural resources, heritage and the deep connections formed on its waters. Please support the effort to make the walleye Ohio's state fish.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Peggy Courtney*

Peggy L. Courtney

Executive Director

Sandusky County Visitors Bureau

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